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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 197th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 27 January 1992, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. ALFONSIN DE FASAN

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AT VIENNA

1. Ms. ANSTEE (Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna) said that the Committee was considering difficult issues that took on even more importance in the context of the cataclysmic events occurring in the world at large. Even as the threat of global conflict was receding, more destructive internecine conflicts had arisen. Some of the developments in Central and Eastern Europe, although positive in themselves, had not necessarily been advantageous to women, since the situation, economic and otherwise, of the civilian population had yet to improve and indeed had worsened in many cases.

2. There was growing recognition of the need to safeguard human rights, which, in periods of conflict, could be ensured only by the application of international norms. Continuing improvements in human rights were particularly important to women, since they did not share equally with men in existing rights. Concern for human rights was the only way to ensure that women could participate equally with men in the changes to come at the global and national levels.

3. The de jure existence of human rights in no way implied that such rights would exist de facto. It was useless to increase the number of countries that had ratified the Convention if it was not in fact being implemented. In its attention to implementation, the Committee set an example for the Centre for Human Rights and for human rights bodies in general.

4. Concern for human rights was growing closer to the main focus of the United Nations Office at Vienna, which was social policy and norms and standards of behaviour in society. In that context, the Office was now focusing on certain profound misconceptions, among them the idea that human rights issues were gender-neutral. That was not the case any more than it had been proved to be the case with social issues, yet preparations for the World Conference on Human Rights were going ahead as if human rights issues were indeed gender-neutral. The Committee could make a major contribution by drawing attention to that misconception, since by definition women's rights were an essential part of human rights. Appraising human rights meant assessing the total situation of the people involved, which meant that there was a need also for gender analysis. For example, the issue of violence against women showed up deficiencies in certain societies' human rights records. As a treaty body, the Committee could exert great influence on the Commission on the Status of Women and was uniquely placed to maintain a continuing dialogue with States parties. Its contribution to the World Conference on Human Rights would serve to emphasize the link between human rights and women's rights.

5. She hoped that the upcoming Security Council summit meeting would look at security not only from the military standpoint but also in the much broader context of social stability and equality of rights for all men and women.

6. Ms. EVATT welcomed the comments made by the Director-General concerning the World Conference on Human Rights. She noted, however, that despite increased support from the Secretariat, the Committee had an extensive backlog of reports of States parties. Although it was doing its best, it would need extra resources and more than just a two-week session if its performance was to improve.

7. Ms. ANSTEE (Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna) assured the Committee that the Secretariat was painfully aware that the resources it could make available were inadequate to the task. Representatives of States parties frequently asked the Secretariat to help them with the preparation of reports or even with the implementation of the Convention in their countries. She had far too few staff to accede to all such requests. She urged members of the Committee to put pressure on their own Governments to provide support and encouragement for the implementation of women's rights.

8. Ms. EVATT said that the Committee was receiving increasing assistance from non-governmental organizations such as International Women's Rights, Action Watch, and the International League for Human Rights. Perhaps the Secretariat could help by simply coordinating such efforts.

9. Ms. ANSTEE (Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna) said that her Office worked closely with some 500 non-governmental organizations and was very conscious of, and grateful for, their contributions, which made it possible to reach out to women and women's groups everywhere; however, that was no substitute for an adequate core programme at the United Nations.

10. Ms. SCHOPP-SCHILLING agreed with Ms. Evatt as to the need for extended sessions of the Committee, which were particularly important for preparing comments on the various articles of the Convention. With regard to the World Conference on Human Rights, members of the Committee also thought that the gender aspect was essential to all Conference deliberations. It might be helpful if the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs were to prepare a short document outlining the relationship between human rights and women's rights.

11. Ms. ANSTEE (Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna) said that the Office would make every effort to increase the resources available to the Committee, in cooperation with Governments and the Secretariat. It would look carefully into the idea of a working paper on the relationship between human rights and women's rights. "Mainstreaming" was very important: women's issues were not separate from other human rights issues and must be integrated with them.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION (continued)

Second periodic report of Czechoslovakia (CEDAW/C/5/Add.26 and CEDAW/C/13/Add.25)

12. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Ryslinkova (Czechoslovakia) took a place at the Committee table.

13. Ms. RYSLINKOVA (Czechoslovakia) said that since her country's second periodic report had been prepared, revolutionary political and social changes had swept the country. The totalitarian regime had collapsed and been replaced by a pluralistic democracy based on the freedom of each individual and the realistic exercise of his or her rights. Free elections had been held for the first time in 40 years and the country's economy was being transformed into a free-market economy.

14. The second periodic report, which had been published in July 1989, naturally did not reflect that new situation. It was based on the concept of a centrally-directed society and presented a largely idealized view of the situation of women's rights, the role of the communist-controlled Czechoslovak Union of Women, the Czechoslovak Legal Code and so on. In reality, certain significant documents, such as those of the Nairobi Conference, had not been published in Czechoslovakia for ideological reasons and Government bodies had not dealt systematically with women's issues, with the exception of women's right to work and to social security and their participation in political life. There had also been an excessive feminization of some areas of employment such as education.

15. The report did summarize the problems faced by women and families in the period 1986-1988, but it took an overly optimistic view. Clearly, it would be possible to take a more complex and objective view of the situation of women's rights in Czechoslovakia only in the next periodic report, to be submitted by the end of the year.

16. The fundamental changes that had taken place in her country in 1990 and 1991 had affected human rights; legislation, where the paternalistic approach to women and families had been abandoned; social and economic policy; and, indirectly, institutional guarantees. A Government policy had been adopted in 1991 which took into account both the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Covention on the Rights of the Child.

17. Although Czechoslovakia was a signatory to the Convention and had participated in the Nairobi Conference, before 1990 neither the Government nor any other body had attempted to implement the Forward-looking Strategies; they had not even been published in Czechoslovakia because of the former regime's distorted concept of equality for women. Czechoslovakia had yet to take up the socio-economic and action programmes promoting equal opportunity for women adopted by the European Communities.

(Ms. Ryslinkova, Czechoslovakia)

18. The present Government was well aware that the status of women in a society was an important indicator of its overall level of civilization, and that the problem of true equality could not be viewed in isolation from the overall socio-economic situation and the need to create the fundamental conditions for comprehensive social development. High social status for women, together with the opportunity and freedom to combine motherhood with a career, were characteristic of the most advanced countries.

19. The transformation of her country's economy had given rise to social uncertainty and, for a period of time, to a real decline in living standards. The inevitable social impact of the economic reform was bound to be viewed in different ways, depending on attitudes to the social certainties of the past. Seeking to promote true equality for women in that atmosphere would therefore require the ongoing attention of the State, Government bodies, research institutes and civic and non-governmental organizations.

20. The Principles of the Policy of the Government of Czechoslovakia in the Sphere of Implementation of the Rights of Women, adopted by the Federal Government in February 1991, had been drafted on the basis of the experience of such countries as Austria, Germany and Sweden in solving social problems and the experience gained from sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women and other international bodies. They also reflected the newly adopted Charter of Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which her country had ratified.

21. Ministries and institutions at the level of the Federation and of the two Republics and women's organizations had participated in formulating the Principles. However, the Principles did not yet embody the necessary national mechanisms for their implementation. That situation reflected the current problems of division of powers between the Federation and the two Republics. The Principles were to be translated into specific measures in 1992 and 1993. Those measures included the country's participation in the International Year of the Family and also in the World Conference on Women, which her Government was interested in hosting. The proposed measures would be widely discussed and would assume special relevance in the pre-election period culminating in June 1992, since the current representation of women in parliaments, governments and other leading posts was grossly insufficient.

22. The Committee's reservations concerning the second periodic report had been largely superseded by the changes that had taken place in Czechoslovakia since November 1989. A new, detailed report would be submitted by the end of the year. In the meantime, she would answer the questions transmitted by the Committee to her Government (CEDAW/C/1992/CRP.2).

(Ms. Ryslinkova, Czechoslovakia)

Articles 1-4

23. No specific anti-discrimination laws allowing women to complain about discrimination had been introduced into the legal system and there were no such laws in the draft of the new Constitution. Although there were no laws which would qualify as discriminatory, that did not mean that there was no de facto discrimination. One of the roles of the new society was to identify forms of discrimination so as to better prevent discrimination in the legal system.

24. The abolition of the leading role of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia had resulted in the loss of power of related organizations such as the Czechoslovak Union of Women. There had not been time for new women's organizations to be formed prior to the first free elections in June 1989. A Charter of Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms had been adopted as an integral part of the Constitution. It guaranteed women an equal position in society in a more explicit way than before; in some areas, it might have the effect of taking away some of their advantages.

25. Women members of Parliament were taking part in drafting the Czech, Slovak and Federal constitutions. Coordination of the drafts prepared by the three parliaments, and commentaries on women's questions made by other institutions, independent organizations and political parties, would be the responsibility of the Deputy Prime Minister and of the Minister of Control, the only woman Minister in the Federal Government.

26. Up to September 1990, activities relating to women's rights had been coordinated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Under article 22 of the Constitutional Law on the Czechoslovak Federation, oversight of human rights, including women's rights, had been entrusted to the Deputy Prime Minister. Resolution No. 120 of February 1991 made the Minister of Control jointly responsible for working out Government policy for the implementation of women's rights and for designing specific measures. Accordingly, the Minister of Control would coordinate all future activities in respect of State policy towards women. Although no federal committee responsible for women's issues and family issues was to be established for the time being, a governmental committee on women and children had been set up in the Slovak Republic. Preparatory work was under way on the establishment of commissions on those issues in all three parliaments.

27. The Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs did not have a separate budget for women's issues. Since the governmental committee on women and children had only recently been established in the Slovak Republic, information on its organization, budget and achievements was not yet available. It would operate as a coordinating body for the Government and non-governmental organizations.

(Ms. Ryslinkova, Czechoslovakia)

28. Since the second periodic report had been prepared in 1988, under the communist regime, it was not clear whether or to what extent the Committee's recommendations had been taken into consideration. The only legal women's organization under the old regime had been the Czechoslovak Union of Women. It was not clear whether that organization had had any part in preparing the report. There were 14 women's organizations registered in Czechoslovakia. Their membership varied from hundreds to alleged several hundreds of thousands (in the case of the former Czechoslovak Union of Women, which was gradually being transformed into smaller organizations).

Article 5

29. One of the basic points in the Principles was financial support for whichever of the parents took care of a child under the age of three. The new family policy was supposed to do the opposite of encouraging women to return to traditional roles. However, the new political and economic system and the market economy system might have that effect, above all because of unemployment. More than 50 per cent of unemployed persons were currently women and the number of single-income households could be expected to grow.

30. Both sexes received the same education; egalitarian education had been necessary in a society that supplied poor services to the population, requiring men and women alike to perform both housekeeping and maintenance activities in the home. Now that the State no longer controlled education, some girls' schools had been established; it seemed that even 40 years of egalitarian education had not fully changed the stereotyped images of men and women.

31. The basic measure attracting men into domestic work and child rearing was the parental leave and allowance accorded under the same rules to either of the parents. There were no measures, except for education, to ensure that that opportunity was used on a larger scale.

Violence against women (articles 2, 5, 11, 12 and 16)

32. There were no plans to introduce special laws and protective measures for women.

Articles 7 and 8

33. Approximately 10 per cent of the members of the three parliaments were currently women; the Speaker of the Czech Parliament was also a woman. There was one woman minister in each of the three governments. In some ministries such as the newly formed Ministry of Privatization, the number of women was very high. It was not possible to use temporary special measures, as they had been used by the previous regime to ensure a majority of Communist Party members in those institutions and were very unpopular. However, the political parties presenting the greatest number of candidates for parliaments and ministries were aware of the problem and it could become an issue in the upcoming election campaign.

(Ms. Ryslinkova, Czechoslovakia)

34. The Zonta Organization was now established in Czechoslovakia; there was also an Organization of Women Entrepreneurs. The old Czechoslovak Union of Women was being restructured. There were 14 registered women's organizations. Women were active in political parties, trade unions and other political organizations; more details would be provided in the third periodic report.

35. There were six women ambassadors out of a total of 65 (including the Ambassadors to Australia, Austria and the United States of America) and 19 women diplomats out of a total of 400. The proportion of women in each of the three parliaments varied between 8 and 12 per cent, while the number of female heads of department in various ministries ranged from 10 to 60 per cent. There were no figures on the number of women in non-governmental organizations.

Article 10

36. The high percentage of women in higher education institutions was a result of many positive pressures, including the generally accepted notion of the equal rights and capabilities of men and women. Moreover, the Communist Party's policy of sending men into jobs in production, which could be considered a form of discrimination against men, had left a greater percentage of women in higher education.

37. The number of women in the vocational training and technical areas was relatively small because many technical positions involved hard physical labour. Moreover, since the Communist Party had undervalued intellectual work, men seeking higher salaries had opted for technical education and vocational training rather than training in such areas as education (where over 71 per cent of students were women). Women also tended to avoid the production sphere because working hours were less flexible than in other areas.

38. Few women achieved leadership roles in the professions, in part because in over 90 per cent of families, it was the wife who stayed at home following the birth of a child even though the law gave equal parental leave rights to both parents. Although the law guaranteed that mothers could return to their jobs, most women preferred to take jobs involving less responsibility. The challenge was to change the priorities of both women and men so that, as their children grew older, women could assume more responsibilities in the work place. Reliable and affordable child care was needed. Under the socialist system, child-care services had been cheap enough to be universally accessible but had often been of such poor quality that women had been reluctant to use them; under the new market economy, child-care services were being improved but were becoming too expensive for many families. Until recently, there had been very few families that had not felt the need for two incomes. The trend towards single-income families was welcomed by the general population and was seen by most women as the freedom to choose, which had previously been denied them.

(Ms. Ryslinkova, Czechoslovakia)

39. By law, all population groups had the same right to education and, until recently, education had been free at all levels. In practice, however, gypsies had received an inferior education as the educational system did not suit their way of life. There were no special schools for gypsies. The new Government was making efforts to rectify the situation, for example, by introducing the gypsy language at some schools and forming departments of gypsy culture at universities, but the results could not yet be evaluated. There were special schools for disabled children; the Government was currently making plans for mainstreaming such children.

Article 11

40. No practical measures had as yet been adopted with regard to equal pay and job evaluation. The right to equal wages was fully guaranteed by legislative measures; since wage inequalities arose during the implementation of the right to wages, the mechanism for the implementation of that right would have to be targeted.

41. Women currently accounted for between 55 and 65 per cent of the total number of unemployed persons, depending on the region. The highest proportion of unemployed women was 65 per cent, in Prague. High-school graduates were the hardest hit by unemployment; tax incentives had been introduced to encourage employers to hire them, and appeared to be effective.

42. It was not lack of skills but the non-availability of child care that discouraged women from accepting high-level responsibilities. However, more than 80 per cent of women of working age were employed. The new economic policy and the transition to a market economy were changing that situation; those trends would be described in the third periodic report.

43. The sectors of the labour market which excluded women were those requiring hard physical labour; wages had been higher for such work, and still were in State enterprises. There were no data on private companies.

44. Parental leave had been extended to fathers in 1987, although few fathers took advantage of that entitlement as it was not considered socially acceptable. The law on maternity allowances had been replaced by a new law under which both parents received a parental allowance during the first three years of the child's life. That allowance did not depend on the number of children; it currently amounted to about two fifths of the minimum wage and could be combined with remunerated activities up to a certain level. The new law reflected the new philosophy of national family policy that the two partners should decide for themselves how to divide family responsibilities.

45. Until recently, nurseries for working parents had been very cheap but of poor quality. Under pressure to make improvements, many nurseries had been forced to close down. The situation had not yet stabilized and further information would be provided in the third periodic report.

(Ms. Ryslinkova, Czechoslovakia)

46. The Government was preparing to submit to Parliament for ratification ILO Convention No. 89 concerning Night Work of Women Employed in Industry, together with the 1990 Protocol, so that those instruments could be harmonized with the new Labour Code to be implemented in January 1993.

47. The new Government had not changed the system of social benefits. Women were treated as individuals, although there were some exceptions: wives of soldiers (there was no compulsory military service for women) could be entitled to a special allowance. A widower's pension had been introduced, but was not available under the same conditions as the widow's pension. On the question of social benefits for unemployed women, such women were subject to the same conditions as men.

48. In response to the question about women and the informal sector, under the socialist economy the only informal sector had been the black market, which had provided all manner of services including hard currency exchange and prostitution. Among the services provided essentially by women were cleaning, babysitting, sewing and, in rural areas, growing and selling produce. It was difficult to even define the informal sector, as a new labour code that would also cover the emerging private sector was still being prepared. Apart from the fact that women had the right to work part-time, no information was available on women's lack of leisure time owing to their combined family and work responsibilities.

Article 12

49. In 1992, the State would continue to absorb the full cost of health care, which meant that women would not yet have to contribute. Additional information on the new health care legislation would be provided to the Committee in the third periodic report. On the question of AIDS education and preventive measures for women, information on AIDS was provided in schools to children aged 14 and 15. The Ministry of Health Care had recently launched an information campaign on AIDS prevention, although it did not specifically include measures for women. Two national programmes for AIDS prevention included education, protective measures and special health care institutions for HIV-positive persons. Both programmes were being modified in order to conform to international principles on AIDS prevention, such as anonymity and voluntary testing. Previously, AIDS testing had been mandatory for certain groups, such as persons who had lived abroad for a certain length of time. As of November 1991, there had been 25 cases of AIDS; a further 128 people, including 9 women, were HIV positive.

50. National family policy did not include provisions on family planning but dealt mainly with parental leave and allowances, tax policy and social security issues. Further details would be provided in the third periodic report. With regard to sex education, family planning and contraception, the opening of the country's borders had increased the availability and range of

(Ms. Ryslinkova, Czechoslovakia)

contraceptives on the market. There were not enough provisions on sex education, family planning and contraceptives to have an effect on the fertility rate. For the past five years, the rate had remained stable at approximately two children per couple.

Article 16

51. In the event of divorce, a two-part allowance paid by the non-custodial parent covered child support and the children's education and remunerated activities connected with the care of the children. Unless agreed otherwise, property acquired jointly by the couple during the marriage was divided equally upon divorce. Unless the marital residence had been the private property of one of them, it was usually awarded to the parent who had custody of the children, generally the mother. Thus far, there had been no experimental studies or research to evaluate women's unpaid domestic work.

52. Ms. NIKOLAEVA asked whether the sweeping social and economic changes that had recently taken place in Czechoslovakia had helped women. It would be interesting to know which areas of society had been destabilized and on which areas the Government was focusing its attention. The Commission on the Status of Women had observed that women in Czechoslovakia strongly advocated the strengthening of the traditional family. In that connection, she wondered whether the already high rate of divorce in Czechoslovakia was on the rise, whether women filed for a divorce more often than men, and how many divorce suits were actually brought before the courts. If the man's conduct was frequently the cause of divorce, she would appreciate information on measures taken to curb violence by men against women.

53. The report made no mention of women's movements and the statement by the Czechoslovak representative had not described the role of women's movements in Czechoslovak society. She would appreciate more information in that regard. It would also be useful to know why the Government had not shown a greater interest in Czechoslovakia's 14 women's organizations and had made no effort to harness their potential for implementing reforms.

54. Ms. LAIOU-ANTONIOU asked why specific machinery for dealing with women's issues had not been established and whether that was because Czechoslovakia already had human rights machinery in place. Specific mechanisms for women were necessary, however, especially since the unemployment rate for women had climbed and Czechoslovak women appeared to be falling into the same trap as Western women who worked part-time. There was even talk of Czechoslovak women staying at home, which would be very convenient for a Government facing economic problems and planning to reduce allocations to the kinds of social services that often employed women. The new democracy could ill afford to do without the talents and potential of women.

(Ms. Laiou-Antoniou)

55. At a recent meeting held at Athens in cooperation with the Council of Europe, Czechoslovak representatives had indicated that programmes and films portraying violence were replacing cultural programmes on television. She was concerned about that and other negative influences of the Western countries. Another danger she foresaw was that, with the privatization of State-controlled enterprises, fewer women managers would be employed. She wondered why the large number of women in higher education and other professions had not organized themselves politically. She also wished to know whether special training programmes were offered to unskilled workers in textile factories that had been closed down in the transition to a free-market economy, or whether Czechoslovakia was working with the retraining programme of the European Community. Lastly, it was regrettable that a new democracy could boast of so few women ministers.

56. Ms. BUSTELO GARCIA del REAL said that she looked forward to the third periodic report of Czechoslovakia, which would contain information that was not available at the current session because of the political and economic situation in that country. In anticipation of the updated report, she wished to stress that the Committee would appreciate information under article 6 of the Convention and others concerning violence against women. As other Committee members had indicated, national and international experience had demonstrated the importance of establishing specific mechanisms to promote women's equality. To the extent possible, available resources should be earmarked for women's institutions, and channels of communication should be opened between the women's movement and political and union leaders.

57. She also wondered whether women were seizing the opportunity to become entrepreneurs as the transition was made to a free-market economy. That was an area in which Western women had had to overcome many obstacles. Czechoslovak women had an opportunity to ensure, from the outset, that they were placed on an equal footing with men in entrepreneurship, and they should request sufficient Government support to that end.

58. Ms. AKAMATSU said that, while she had been disappointed by Czechoslovakia's outdated second periodic report, she understood why some information could not yet be provided. She, too, was concerned about the possible danger that women's status would be diminished under the national family policy. She expressed disappointment that, in Czechoslovakia, it was considered exceptional, and even humiliating, for fathers to take parental leave, as it was her understanding that, under the socialist system, it had been equally acceptable for the father or the mother to take such leave.

59. Ms. ABAKA also cautioned that if, under Czechoslovakia's national family policy, mothers tended to stay at home and fathers worked, girls and young women would be discouraged from pursuing higher education. She would also appreciate clarification of the legislative reforms concerning prostitution, which seemed indirectly to legalize it.

60. Ms. BRAVO NUÑEZ DE RAMSEY expressed concern that women and children should not become the unintended victims of the economic and social changes taking place in Czechoslovakia. For example, certain day-care centres were being closed for budgetary reasons and that would deprive working women of the necessary assistance. She also wondered whether certain provisions of national family policy might actually be detrimental to women. She would appreciate clarification of the policy of promoting part-time work for women and, specifically, whether it meant that their salaries would be reduced as well, for that would only increase women's economic dependence on men. If on the other hand women were to be compensated for part-time work and also for their work as mothers and homemakers, that would entail other risks.

61. Ms. CORTI said that the Czechoslovak presentation confirmed the impression she had had on a recent visit there that both the Czechoslovak authorities and women themselves were generally passive about women's issues. Czechoslovakia was moving away from a system in which everything had been taken care of by the Government towards a system that required greater initiative. She sensed that the Czechoslovak people still did not understand how to derive benefits from a democratic system. For example, there was general discontent among women about their twofold responsibilities - at work and in the home - but they had not taken any action. The 14 women's organizations in Czechoslovakia still had no programme or specific goals, and discrimination as a term and a concept had yet to be defined. She feared that further delays would result in lost opportunities.

62. In reply to questions under article 4, the Czechoslovak representative had indicated that special temporary measures were avoided because they were associated with the former regime. Yet, at times, such measures could well be the most effective means of resolving women's problems. She wondered about the consequences of early marriage, which was more frequent in Czechoslovakia than in other European countries, for young career women, particularly as day-care centres were closing. She also wondered about the effects of unemployment on the many two-income families. It was not clear why the current Government was not devoting sufficient attention to the establishment of mechanisms to deal specifically with women's issues. She would appreciate an explanation as to why the Czech Republic, whose legislation was far more advanced than that of the Slovak Republic, had no organization for the protection of women and children while the Slovak Republic did.

63. It would be interesting to have information on contraceptives - who prescribed them and whether they were distributed free of charge. She wished to know the status of new Czechoslovak legislation on abortion. Lastly, she referred to the Czechoslovak representative's remark that there was no informal sector as such, although women provided services such as domestic help. She did not understand how an economy in transition could not have an informal sector. She wished to know whether there were plans to change the model of employment for women or increase men's share of responsibilities in the home.

64. Ms. SCHOPP-SCHILLING thanked the representative of Czechoslovakia for her frank statement. It was absolutely necessary that Czechoslovakia should establish national machinery to deal with women's issues. The same recommendation had been made in respect of all Central and Eastern European countries at the conference of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development that had taken place in Paris in September 1991, at which the Czechoslovak Government had been represented at a very high level. Her own country, Germany, had national machinery, and the political parties had supported the establishment of machinery to deal with women's issues at the state and municipal levels as well in what were now known as the new states, the former German Democratic Republic. Such machinery made it possible to ensure that women's issues were put on the political agenda.

65. She had the impression that in Czechoslovakia women's issues were considered very much in the light of family issues. That approach gave rise to problems, since women should be treated as individuals in their own right.

66. With regard to the formulation of social and labour-market policies, it was necessary, once again, to decide whether women were to be treated as individuals, as was the case in Sweden, or as members of family units, as was mostly the case in Germany. Since the employment rate for women had been so high in the former Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, she saw no reason why Czechoslovakia should shift its focus away from considering men and women as individuals. Germany was in the process of shifting its emphasis away from women as members of family units. Czechoslovakia had an opportunity to start afresh and could thus avoid making some of the mistakes which other countries had made some 40 years earlier.

67. Germany was facing labour-market problems similar to those experienced by Czechoslovakia. She was therefore very conscious of the importance of making provision for equal opportunity officers when employment offices were established. The role of such officers would be to ensure that their colleagues did not adhere to stereotypes, so as to break through the sex-segregated labour market. They would have to see to it that men and women received training and further education financed by the employment authorities in numbers proportionate to their respective unemployment rates, which meant that women should actually have a greater share of the opportunities in question. Moreover, in establishing its labour-market policies, the Czechoslovak Government might also consider introducing quotas for women, or at least numerical goals, in order to ensure that they received fair treatment.

68. Ms. GONZALEZ MARTINEZ expressed concern at the child-care situation and the level of violence in Czechoslovakia. Violence against women must be treated as a separate issue. She felt strongly that it was inappropriate to attempt to ensure that similar policies were adopted in all countries. Each individual country must choose its own policies. However, she wished to suggest that in its next report, the Czechoslovak Government should provide more information on the impact of social change on women with particular reference to article 6 of the Convention. She would be interested to know, for example, whether there had been an increase in prostitution.

(Ms. Gonzalez Martinez)

69. Moreover, she would appreciate clarification of the term "excessive feminization" used by the representative of Czechoslovakia in her introductory statement. She also understood that there was a Ministry of Control. It would be helpful for the Committee to have more information in that connection. Lastly, she was concerned about the situation of the gypsy minority in Czechoslovakia, particularly with respect to the implementation of article 12 of the Convention. For example, it was not clear whether the practice of sterilizing gypsy women had actually come to an end.

70. Ms. UKEJE said that the report showed that Czechoslovakia was making a commendable effort to adjust to a new system.

71. With respect to article 6 of the Convention, she asked whether the Czechoslovak Government had deliberately legalized prostitution. With reference to article 11, she noted that women were slow to accept positions of responsibility because they feared that they would be unable to combine such responsibility with their domestic commitments. She wondered whether any steps were being taken to encourage women to accept high-level positions. It was only by accepting such positions that they would be able to influence policy at a high level.

72. Ms. ILIC said that she would like to know how readily available family planning counselling and contraceptives were in Czechoslovakia. She wondered, for example, whether the cost of such counselling and of contraceptives had risen significantly. She was also concerned to know how maternity leave and family benefits had been affected by the transition to a market economy.

73. Ms. RYSLINKOVA (Czechoslovakia) said that her Government's fundamental problem was that it was difficult to identify the issues it must tackle. Under the previous regime, virtually all women had been employed and it had been a specific goal of the Communist Party during a given period to abolish the role of the family in society. The aim had been that the family should gradually disappear. Those two factors were still having a major influence on views of what was desirable or undesirable in Czechoslovak society. It was owing to such factors that her Government had not considered it absolutely necessary to set up machinery to deal with women's issues.

74. On the issue of violence, she said that, as a police State, the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic had been able to ensure that violence was kept to a minimum. Her country was now facing violence on a far greater scale and did not know how to deal with it. She took due note of the view expressed in the Committee that violence against women must be treated as a separate issue. She would be sure to transmit that view to her Government.

75. Where child care was concerned, her country was still having to cope with the effects of the policies of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. Earlier, it had been the norm for babies and small children to be placed in nursery schools or kindergartens. That fact heavily influenced current attitudes

(Ms. Ryslinkova, Czechoslovakia)

towards the institutions in question. She was, however, fully aware that women's problems could be solved only if provision was made for child care of an acceptable quality. Unfortunately, the necessary action called for a level of financial resources that was currently simply not available.

76. A number of speakers had raised points concerning parental leave. Under the relevant legislation, which was very new, mothers and fathers had equal rights and were entitled to the same benefits. It must be borne in mind, however, that the Government had no way of forcing private companies to permit mothers or fathers who wished to take parental leave to return to their jobs later. She strongly agreed that steps must be taken to encourage more fathers to take parental leave.

77. The issue of prostitution had also been raised by a number of speakers. The Czechoslovak Socialist Republic had not only considered prostitution illegal, but had claimed that the problem simply did not exist. In fact, there had been prostitution on a relatively large scale in Prague, owing to the presence of a clientele in possession of hard currency. Her Government had decided to legalize prostitution, since prohibiting it had been clearly ineffective. She had to acknowledge that no real effort was currently being made to combat prostitution in her country.

78. The CHAIRPERSON thanked the Czechoslovak representative for responding to the points raised by the members of the Committee.

79. Speaking in her personal capacity, she suggested that the Government of Czechoslovakia should consider taking specific steps to ensure that the text of the Convention was widely disseminated and discussed in the country.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.